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ABSTRACT

This study examined the short- and long-term effects of the Samford Summer Institute for Teacher Excellence (SSITE 2000), which created a climate for teacher leadership and for educators to connect with leadership resources. It investigated how two teachers and their principal networked with other school leaders, learned from successful leadership experiences, and developed their own action plans during 2001. Data from interviews, observations, and surveys indicated that participants came in with a significant desire to learn and expected to network within their own team and with other participants. The notion of teacher leadership was new to participants, but they embraced exemplary leadership ideas. They viewed the SSITE as an opportunity to validate and improve their profession. Participants experienced a carryover effect 2 weeks after SSITE. They maintained positive attitudes toward teacher leadership, became aware of resources, strengthened their beliefs in public education, and made strong commitments to act on teacher leadership. Commitments that participants made at SSITE turned into a mindset to support teacher leadership and solid actions in their profession, especially at the school level. The long-term impact was demonstrated by the leadership actions participants took to improve teacher and teaching quality and community outreach. (SM)

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LEADERSHIP TRANSFORMATION OF TWO TEACHERS AND THEIR PRINCIPAL: A CASE STUDY

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Introduction

SERVE (SouthEastern Regional Vision for Education, a federally funded educational laboratory in Southeastern U.S.) partnered with Samford University to host SSITE 2000 (Samford Summer Institute for Teacher Excellence) in Birmingham, Alabama from July 16 – 19, 2000. SSITE 2000 was designed to create a climate for teacher leadership and for teachers/educators to connect with leadership resources.

This study aims to capture the complexity and process of teacher leadership transformation of a team of two teachers and their principal during and after SSITE 2000. Through in-depth study, the authors examined how the three participants networked with other school leaders, learned from successful leadership experiences, and developed their own action plans during 2001. More importantly, the study aims to document and understand the short term and long term effects of SSITE 2000 on the two teachers and their principal.

Four research questions guided the present study:

1. What expectations do participants have about SSITE 2000? What is their initial attitude toward teacher leadership?
2. What immediate responses do participants have to particular issue(s) presented/discussed during SSITE 2000?
3. What post-SSITE, lasting, and long term effects of SSITE on participants was reported? Why?
4. What can one learn from similar teacher leadership training?

Methodology and Data Sources

A qualitative research approach was employed in the present study. This was based on the nature of information (in-depth descriptive information) that SERVE requested. Major data sources are interviews collected through face-to- face round table discussions, individual phone conversations, and email with three participants (i.e., Principal "Wendy" and teachers "Nancy" and "Rosie"). Observation and survey data were also collected during SSITE 2000 to understand and triangulate interview data. Documents produced by SSITE 2000 sponsors and participants (for example, the meeting agenda, state action plan posters, and the roster of SSITE participants) were also used to provide factual information.

Interview Schedule and Information Aimed to Gain

Five rounds of interviews were conducted. Interview schedules and purposes were specified in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Interview Schedule and Information Aimed to Gain

INTERVIEWS	TIME	INFORMATION
1. Pre-SSITE Group Interview	Two hours before SSITE	Individual and team background information; and expectations of SSITE.
2. Daily-Learning Group Interviews	End of each day at SSITE	Issues learned; application of learning; and suggestion for SSITE improvement.
3. Post-SSITE Immediate Effect Individual Phone Interview	Two weeks after SSITE	General impression; learning at SSITE; and application of learning.
4. Lasting Impact Individual Phone Interview	One and a half months after SSITE	Learning at SSITE; application of learning; and future plans.
5. Long Term Impact Individual Phone Interview	Eight months after SSITE	Professional routines and obligations; comparison with pre-SSITE experiences; school/teaching/student learning improvement; future plans; and observations of colleagues (for triangulation purposes).

Interview Guiding Questions

Specific interview guiding questions are listed below:

1. Pre-SSITE Focus Group Interview (Time: two hours before SSITE)

- Briefly introduce yourself – your name, title, school or university, and professional background.
- When and how was your team formed? For what purpose? How does your team work organizationally? What have you accomplished?
- What do you expect to learn from the Samford Summer Institute? Why?

2. Daily-Learning Interview #1, #2, and #3 (Time: end of each day at SSITE)

- What are the issues brought out in the presentations and discussion today? What did you learn?
- Do those issues mean something to you? Why? Are you going to do something about them? If so, how?
- What else needs to be addressed?
- What are your general comments about today's activities? Is the Samford Summer Institute a comfortable learning environment? What needs to be improved?

3. Post-SSITE Immediate Effect Individual Phone Interview (Time: two weeks after SSITE)

- What is your general impression about the Samford Summer Institute? To what extent does the Institute match your expectations? Why? What needs to be changed? Will you come next year? Why?
- What did you learn from the Institute? What do the issues you have just mentioned mean to you?
- Are you going to do something about what you have just learned from the Institute? If so, how?

1. Lasting Impact Phone Individual Interview (Time: one and a half months after SSITE)

- What did you learn from the Samford Summer Institute?
- After the Institute, did anything significant happen because you and your team learned something from the Institute? Please give me examples.
- Have you done your job or interacted with your team members differently

because of the Samford Summer Institute? Please give me examples.

- What is your future plan for your work and your team? Why?

2. Long-Term Impact Phone Individual Interview (time: Eight months after SSITE)

- Can you tell me about the activities you do daily, weekly, and monthly inside and outside the classroom (school)? Please feel free to add any activities that do not happen regularly.
- What are your obligations in and outside the classroom (school)? Please give me examples.
- If you compare the routines and obligations that you have just mentioned with the ones you had last school year before summer, what are the differences? Why?
- What's your overview of your school, teaching environment, and student learning? If you compare what you have just mentioned with what you saw last year, do you see any differences? Please give me examples.

  What might have caused the differences?
- What's your future plan for your profession? To what extent do you foresee some obstacles? What are they? Why?
- You went to SSITE last summer with your colleagues, do you see them do things differently this year? Please give me examples. What might have caused the difference?

Findings

Initial Expectations

Generally speaking, participants came with a high degree of desire to learn. They expected to learn about (1) the characteristics of successful and unsuccessful leadership programs, (2) specific leadership skills, (3) issues and barriers related to leadership, and (4) leadership resources.

Participants expressed an expectation to network within their own team and with other participants. They believed that through networking they could break isolation and reach out for more learning and resources.

Daily Learning Effects

The notion of *teacher leadership* was new to participants, but they seemed to overcome skepticism and embraced exemplary leadership ideas presented to them. They took a positive learning attitude toward the new framework of teachers as leaders. They appeared self-confident and viewed SSITE as an opportunity to validate and improve their profession. They became aware of the existence of leadership in their environment and explored leadership issues. They started thinking about applying what they learned to their profession. They even went beyond classroom and school levels of learership, and contributed to state action plans, and were ambitious to be involved at the policy level. They wanted to improve public education. They wanted their learning at SSITE to be a sound foundation for future work.

Post-SSITE Effects

Generally speaking, participants experienced a "carryover" effect two weeks after

SSITE. They maintained a positive attitude toward teacher leadership, became aware of resources, strengthened belief in public education, and made strong commitments to act on teacher leadership.

Lasting Impact

The lasting impact of SSITE 2000 on participants is that the commitments that they made at SSITE turned into a mindset to support teacher leadership and even solid actions in their profession, especially at the school level (e.g., serving on a math or school improvement committee). Participants were also committed to pursuing a leadership role at a higher level in the future.

Long Term Impact

The long term impact of SSITE 2000 is demonstrated in the leadership actions that participants took to improve teacher and teaching quality and community reaching out/networking. Specifically, both teachers reported that they (1) mentored new and student teachers; (2) participated in school wide collaborative planning on mathematics teaching; and (3) took graduate courses or participanted in professional development conferences. One teacher ("Rosie") indicated that time contraints were a major concern for her to pursue a leadership role outside classroom so she started with authenticating classroom tasks (on history, science, mathematics, and on-line library research), and then shared the innovations with her school and community. The other teacher ("Nancy") indicated that she was hungry for professional and political information and was actively connecting with other teachers. She also reported that she was more more confident and

aware of her own impact on colleagues. Nancy was recently selected as City Teacher of the Year.

On the other hand, the principal ("Wendy") reported that she consciouly involved teachers in her decision-making process; and she conducted action research, increased classroom observation time, and provided release time for teachers in her school to plan classes collaboratively. Wendy proudly presented and shared the latter inovation in a monthly principal meeting. Wendy is confident that she can make positive changes in public education.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Teacher leadership training motivates teachers to take active roles in making changes in classrooms, schools, and communities, and lays a foundation for high-performing schools and students. Thus, educational institutes (at school, district, state, and federal levels), teacher preparation programs, and private funding agencies should support and fund teacher leadership training because leadership training does increase teachers' self-esteem and confidence in teaching and public education.

Characteristics of successful teacher leadership training that results in strong long term impact on participants are: (1) sessions that fulfill participants' learning needs; (2) schedules that provide opportunities for participants to interact; and (3) arrangement that helpe participants turn knowledge into solid actions.

Further recommendations for future teacher leadership training are:

1. A summary of teacher leadership literature should be sent out to invitees before they attend the training. A comprehensive participant roster should also be given to all participants to help them network during and after the training.

2. In order to facilitate collaboration, various levels of educators should be invited: teachers, principals, school/district/state/ federal education administrators, university faculty, pre-service teachers, policy makers, board members and/or researchers.
3. Participants should organize and participate as teams and receive similar training as provided in SSITE 2000.
4. Participants shoud bring a specific site problem/issue/dilemma to the training and try to solve it during the training or make plans to solve it after the training.
5. Upon departure, participants should determine baseline data which will act as indicators of school and/or student performance improvement.
6. Participants should keep journals on how their plan and/or solution affects baseline data.
7. Researchers should collect and publiss the results on how teacher leadership improves school and/or student performance.

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